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Letter dated 21 March 2000 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 16 March 2000, which I have received from the Acting Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

00-35616 (E) 230300

Annex

Letter dated 16 March 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1264 (1999), I attach the seventh (and final) periodic report on the operations of the International Force, East Timor (INTERFET) (see appendix). I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) David **Stuart**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Acting Permanent Representative

Appendix

Seventh periodic report to the United Nations on the operations of the International Force, East Timor

1-23 February 2000

Introduction

1. The International Force, East Timor (INTERFET) has achieved its United Nations mandate. A number of INTERFET force elements have now completed transition to a United Nations peacekeeping force under the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). This will be the final periodic report to the United Nations on INTERFET operations.

2. The sixth periodic report (S/2000/92) noted that INTERFET had fulfilled its mandate under Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) to restore peace and security to all parts of East Timor, except in some areas of the border region of the Oecussi enclave. The security situation in East Timor was benign, but security in the enclave border areas alone remained a concern for INTERFET and would require continuing close attention by UNTAET.

3. The sixth period report also noted that INTERFET had fully satisfied its mandate to support wider United Nations operations and humanitarian assistance programmes. INTERFET also undertook a wide range of supporting activities that made a significant contribution to the restoration of peace, civil reconstruction and the administration of justice.

4. The success of INTERFET is attributed to: the performance by INTERFET commanders and national contingents; the continuing resolve and commitment shown by the United Nations and the international community; cooperation from the Government of Indonesia; and the courage and resilience of the East Timorese people.

Transition to UNTAET

5. On 23 February 2000, INTERFET formally transferred full responsibility for military security in all parts of East Timor to the United Nations peacekeeping force under UNTAET. The transition was effected by the signing of a joint operational transition declaration by the Commander of INTERFET, the Commander of the UNTAET peacekeeping force and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

6. The transition process followed a joint transition plan agreed by the United Nations and INTERFET on 9 January 2000. The plan provided for concurrent INTERFET and United Nations peacekeeping forces headquarters and the progressive transfer of responsibility for geographic regions from one force to the other. The Eastern Sector of INTERFET transferred control to the UNTAET peacekeeping force on 1 February, followed by the Central Sector on 14 February and the Oecussi enclave on 15 February. The Western Sector, covering the border region with western Timor, transferred control to UNTAET on 21 February, with the logistics and supporting elements transferring on 23 February 2000.

Operation overview and lessons learned

7. INTERFET's achievement of its mandate in a short period of time resulted from its clear, appropriate mandate and the professional composition of the INTERFET force. The diverse coalition of 22 nations, which included significant regional representation, was assembled and deployed very quickly, and at its peak consisted of nearly 10,000 personnel. The present report affords a timely opportunity to outline INTERFET's key assessments and lessons learned.

Coalition matters

8. The deployment of a multinational force in East Timor served the purpose of providing a rapid response to an immediate humanitarian crisis, while simultaneously allowing the United Nations time to assemble a "blue beret" peacekeeping force and develop longer-term strategies. INTERFET's experience demonstrated the significant advantages of selecting a coalition leader from the immediate region. These include proximity to the crisis zone and an attendant ability for the coalition leader to respond

quickly to a crisis, commensurate with a more specific knowledge of the conditions surrounding the intervention. The coalition leader must be able to contribute a large proportion of the initial force and needs to provide ongoing logistic support to the operation.

Mandate, mission and end state

9. INTERFET benefited from having a clear United Nations mandate and operational end state. Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) provided INTERFET with an unambiguous mission statement, while resolution 1272 (1999) gave INTERFET a clear end state and identified the preconditions necessary to transfer military responsibility to UNTAET. These factors were vital in the development and implementation of military plans for the operation and transition.

10. The establishment of both resolutions under a Chapter VII mandate was also important in giving INTERFET the powers and range of response options necessary to achieve its mission. INTERFET's ability under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations to deliver appropriate force decisively and quickly was critical to success and the prevention of widespread loss of life.

11. It is important that the designation of a mission as Chapter VI or Chapter VII be considered carefully in each instance. However, INTERFET's experience in East Timor shows that where doubt exists, a Chapter VII mandate can deliver great benefits to the force commander and contribute to the rapid achievement of operational goals. The benefits of a Chapter VII mandate arise from the flexibility and range of response options available to the force commander. In all cases the response should be proportional and graduated. By contrast, a force commander operating under a Chapter VI mandate has fewer response options available to address potentially the same range of security-related scenarios as those encountered under a Chapter VII mandate.

Media profile

12. INTERFET's experience illustrates that the establishment of a positive global media profile can be highly beneficial to a mission's success. A positive profile assists the process of coalition-building, by reassuring potential troop-contributing nations of the merits and management of the mission. INTERFET was proactive in establishing a positive public profile and facilitated the provision of information on issues of general interest, provided support to the media contingent, provided timely responses to inquiries and ensured media access to senior mission officers.

Transition arrangements

13. The transition arrangements implemented by INTERFET and UNTAET were unique and proved to be very effective. INTERFET and UNTAET peacekeeping forces executed a progressive transition of security responsibility, rather than the traditional comprehensive, single-step transition. This approach enabled the embryonic UNTAET peacekeeping operation headquarters to accept responsibility in a phased manner commensurate with its developing capability and the progressive handover to the new force headquarters and resulted in an effective transfer of operational responsibility.

Conclusion

14. INTERFET has restored peace and security to East Timor, assisted with national reconstruction and humanitarian relief operations, and created an environment conducive to the resumption of normal activities by the local population. INTERFET commends the contribution made to the achievement of its mandate by the 22 countries constituting the multinational force.